

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3837

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15550

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT, US

SUBJ: KAGNEW FOUR

REF: A) ROME 15391; B) STATE 250696; C) KHARTOUM 2469

SUMMARY: GOI REGRETFULLY DECLINES OUR RQUEST THAT ITALIAN EMBASSY KHARTOUM HAND OVER LETTER TO GHEBRESELLASSIE. URGES ITALIAN ROLE CONTINUE BE KEPT UNDER CLOSE COVER. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF CALLED AT MFA MIDDAY OCTOBER 23 TO RECEIVE GOI RESPONSE TO USG REQUEST THAT GOI EMBASSY KHARTOUM BE INSTRUCTED TO DELIVER ENVELOPE TO GHEBRESELLASSIE WITH COMMENT RESTRICTED TO THAT CITED PENULTIMATE SENTENCE, PARA. 1, REF. B. SUBSAHARAN OFFICE DIRECTOR RACHELE REPORTED THAT HIS SUPERIORS (PRESUMABLY INCLUDING SECGEN MANZINI WHO HAS SHOWN HIGH INTEREST IN CASE) HAD REGRETFULLY CONCLUDED THAT GOI IS NOT IN POSITION TO COMPLY WITH OUR REQUEST.

2. HOWEVER, AFTER REVIEW OF US RATIONALE IN DECLINING TO BE INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN ELEMENTS OF ELF/PLF AND IN ASKING GOI TO HAND ENVELOPE TO GHEBRESELLASSIE, RACHELE UNDERTOOK TO REVIEW MATTER ONCE AGAIN WITH MFA POLICY MAKERS. DECISION, REAFFIRMING THAT CITED IN PRECEDING PARAGRAPH, WAS DELAYED UNTIL EVENING OCTOBER 24 WHEN INSTRUCTIONAL TELEGRAMS WERE SENT GOI
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EMBASSIES WASHINGTON AND KHARTOUM.

3. MFA RATIONALE:

A) GOI HAD INTERCEDED AT USG REQUEST, THE ENVELOPE COMPRISES PLF RESPONSE, HAD BEEN HANDED TO USG IN COMPLIANCE WITH GOI UNDERTAKING TO PLF, AND HAD NEVERTHELESS ENDED UP IN ITALIAN POSSESSION BECAUSE IT HAD OFFERED FACILITATIVE SERVICE (ITS POUCH SERVICE) TO USG. GOI WOULD NOW LIKE USG TO RE-POSSESS THE LETTER FOR WHATEVER DISPOSITION IT NOW WISHES. IF DESIRED GOI WOULD BE WILLING TO RETURN IT TO ITS AUTHOR, WOLDE AB WOLDE MARIAM.

B) GOI BELIEVES, WERE IT TO HAND ENVELOPE TO GHEBRESELLASSIE, IT WOULD BECOME INVOLVED DE FACTO IN SUBSTANCE OF OUR PROBLEM. GHEBRESELLASSIE WOULD BE COMPELLED TO PUT TO GOI REP A SERIES OF QUESTIONS (WHY GOI "FAILED" TO GET LETTER TO USG, OR WHY USG REJECTED LETTER, ETC.) TO WHICH GOI REP WOULD NOT RESPOND FOR MULTIPLE REASONS, INCLUDING NOT GOING BEYOND OUR MANDATE. AT THE SAME TIME, HIS INABILITY (OR UNWILLINGNESS AS LIKELY PERCEIVED BY PLF) TO REPLY, FOLLOWING USG REFUSAL TO ACCEPT LETTER, COULD IN ITSELF RAISE PLF QUESTIONS AS TO GOI ROLE AND INTENT. RACHELE ADDED AGAIN THAT GOI SILENCE IN FACE OF VALID (IN PLF EYES) QUESTIONS COULD CAUSE PLF TO RETHINK ITS STANCE RE TALKS, WITH UNKNOWN CONSEQUENCES FOR THE HOSTAGES.

4. COMMENT: GOI IS CLEARLY INTENT ON STAYING OUT OF, AND APPEARING TO STAY OUT OF, SUBSTANCE OF THE PROBLEM. UNDOUBTEDLY MINDFUL OF ITS OWN BONA FIDES WITH PLF, IT ALSO DOES NOT WISH TO RISK ASSOCIATION WITH ANY UNHAPPY CONSEQUENCES WHICH COULD ARISE OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH OUR REQUEST.

5. RACHELE ASSURED EMBOFF THAT, ALTHOUGH WE DIFFER CONCERNING THE MODALITIES PERTAINING TO THE ENVELOPE, GOI REMAINS FULLY WILLING TO ASSIST US AS A COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL. HE TOOK NOTE OF EMBOFF'S REPETITION THAT USG REMAINS WILLING TO MEET WITH CAPTORS, FOR USE SHOULD PLF SUBSEQUENTLY QUERY GOI RE US INTENTIONS.

6. RACHELE NOTED WITH SATISFACTION THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE MANAGED TO KEEP USG/GOI COLLABORATION COMPLETELY SECRET SO FAR, CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMENTING THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT IT REMAIN SO.

7. COMMENT: RACHELE APPARENTLY KNEW NOTHING, AND WE SAID NOTHING, CONCERNING CONTACT ALREADY MADE IN KHARTOUM AND POSSIBLE ONE IN JIDDA. ALTHOUGH ONE OR BOTH OF THOSE CONTACTS COULD MAKE THIS CONTRETEMPS OVER WOLDEMARIAMS ENVELOPE NO LONGER GERMANE TO OUR PROBLEM, THERE REMAINS THE QUESTION OF ITS DISPOSITION IN A FASHION REFLECTING USG APPRECIATION OF GOI ASSISTANCE TO DATE.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: ADVISE CONCERNING WHAT WE SHOULD TELL MFA
CONCERNING DISPOSITION OF ENVELOPE, AND WHETHER WE MAY ADVISE GOI
OF KHARTOUM CONTACT, PERHAPS FOLLOWING LINES OF ADDIS ABABA 12602.
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